

PROFESSOR SWING AND OSCAR.

The Apostle Is Rather Disappointed Over the Professor's Alliance Article, and Gives Forth No Uncertain Sound.

Professor David Swing's criticism of Oscar Wilde, published in the *Alliance* recently, seems to have been read by the latter and to cause him some annoyance. Mr. Wilde was interviewed by a representative of THE INTER OCEAN on Saturday at the Grand Pacific Hotel in response to a written request from the apostle of the lily and kneebreech. He said: "I lectured in Rockford, Ill., lately, and there learned that Mr. Swing's article had induced the lady principal of a seminary who had purchased a couple of tickets to my lecture to return them to the box office. The audience was small. I felt that an attack that could so influence a whole city must be at least remarkable, and I looked forward to reading it with pleasurable emotions. I usually pay no attention to newspaper ridicule or criticism, and have long ago learned to entirely disregard it. But next to having a staunch friend is the pleasure of having a brilliant enemy. There is nothing so depressing as to be attacked by a fool, for you cannot answer or fight him with his own weapons."

"You have read the article, then?" said the reporter.

"Yes; but I confess to having been greatly disappointed at Professor Swing's article. If a man attacks one for the clothes that one likes to wear, he should go for his answer to the tailor who made them; and if he assails me for a preference in flowers, he should argue the matter with a gardener. As for his sneer at me for receiving a fee for lecturing, I can assure him that he is not the first clergyman who has thus condemned me. But this shaft loses its sting when I consider that it comes from a body of men, most of whom preach for a salary."

"I can only conclude," continued Mr. Wilde, "that Professor Swing did not attend my lecture. If he had done so he would have seen that I divided it into two parts, in the first of which I dwelt upon the necessity of teaching the handicraftsman to work not only with his hands, like a machine, but with his heart and with his head. If he does not do so his work will be nothing more than commonplace and have no beauty of art in it at all. I dwelt on the moral education that working in every art would give a man the two things upon which all good art is founded—truth and honesty. In the world of business it is possible for the liar and cheat to escape detection all their lives—not so in art. A workman who creates a sham or does a dishonest work in his art, such as painting wood to represent marble, or staining paper to represent stone, or pretending that a thing is solid when it is merely a hollow sham, knows that in consequence of it his work is worthless and will not last. In the second part of my lecture I treated of those who only look at art and do not create, the ordinary man or woman of life, and showed of what nature the refining influence of noble and beautiful art would be to them from their childhood to their manhood. I spoke of what influence the arts would have in producing between all countries 'a common, intellectual spirit, for no truth of history is clearer than this, that national hatreds are always strongest when civilization is lowest. I acknowledge that I am surprised to find that any one with the name of David should be found fighting in the ranks of the Philistines. He ought to take a pebble from the banks of the Chicago River and hurl it at that monstrous Goliath of Chicago architecture, the water-tower, instead of praising it as being, as he calls it, calm and rational. Those two epithets are very unfortunate in this connection. Perhaps I am wrong in taking the Professor seriously, for, from what I have seen of American literature, I have found that the sermon of the divine is always humorous, and the writing of the humorous always depressing. I hope in my next lecture to dwell at length on the relations between art and morality, which have been so much misunderstood."

"When will you lecture here again?"

"Next Saturday evening, in Central Music Hall, on 'Interior and Exterior House Decorations.'"

"Did you ever lecture in England?"

"No; I made my debut as a lecturer in New York City."